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Papers of Anne Whitney (MSS.4)

5-11-1840

Letter from Alexander Whitney, Jackson, Louisiana, to Anne Whitney, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1840 May 11

Alexander Whitney

Wellesley College Archives

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May 11th, 1840
Jackson

Dear Ned - I write once more, before returning home - because I have an interesting subject to talk about - and because I may give you some particulars that will not be contained in the public prints of that most disastrous affair in our neighborhood, the tornado at Natchez. One of our townsmen happened to be in N. at the time. He was at dinner in the City Hotel when the ~~the~~ wind without a moments premonition came upon them. Just imagine in a period of 10 minutes, for that he tells me was the extent more than ~~the~~ third of a town as large as Charlestown Mass. laid completely prostrate. A Hotel as large as the Tremont stood flat upon the ground before the occupants had time to reach the street! All the churches were leveled while the Banks ~~were saved~~ stood firm which makes the Cocos think it was the work of the Devil. Natchez is divided into two towns the best part of the City being situated on a high bluff and the other town "Natchez stands" being located immediately upon the Banks of the River. The Hurricane seems to have come across the River having first prostrated a small village on the opposite side. Of the lower town not a house remains! Of the upper town about one third was destroyed. You have often heard me speak of Natchez as the most beautiful town in the south west.

It was my favorite town and indeed the only one that I have seen, to which I could reconcile myself as a permanent abode.

The poor fellow who gives this account is so much excited and agitated at the horror he has witnessed that now on the third day he can hardly speak of it without crying out right. He spent 24 hours in the place after the ~~catastrophe~~ storm assisting in removing the dead & dying & wounded. Of the loss of life no estimate can yet be made.

Dead bodies are floating in the Mississippi and several have been picked up at Bayou Sara & Port Hudson. Steam boats at the landing were destroyed with the greater part probably of all on board. together with about 50 flat boats averaging perhaps on board at the time 3 hands to each boat. Last year at this time there were several several ships from Boston loading with cotton at Natchez - whether any were exposed to this gale I do not know.

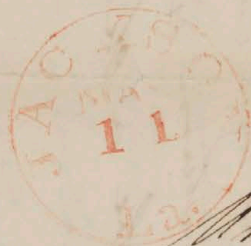
We have had some very cool weather since the gale which has caused some sickness in the vicinity of Jackson. Nothing being so bad for us in this region as sudden chills after great heat. All our family

have escaped except Joseph who has had a pretty severe fever. from which however he is recovering.

Long for New England once more. There is nothing but disaster in the news of the day. we ask each other not what the good news is - but what has happened. We have no money in our pockets but what is at 50 per cent discount - Cotton at 5 Cts. and honesty none in the market. Our courts have suspended. Villainy is unpunished. I long to go back upon my old feelings - to throw off for a time this cold & heartless contempt of my species & to view men without distrust. I cannot bear to think that the change which has taken place in my views of men & things is the natural result of increased agland observation. I will come home in June. and when I return in the fall I hope there will be a change for the better.

Affectionately
Your Brother

Alfred Whiting



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Mr. Edward Whitney -
Care of S. R. Whitney Esq.
East Cambridge
Mass -

July 1 - 2 6-4
E W 131-144 151 a
S B a 141-141
H B 151-151-151-151
R B a 141-141-141-141

E W 131 2 3-4
S B 131-131-131-131
H B a a a a
R B 131 141-131-151
E B a a 1-1-1-1

Sept 1
E W 151
S B a
R B 141
H B a
E B a